

NSC BRIEFING

21 January 1954

MOSLEM BROTHERHOOD THREAT IN EGYPT

Egyptian government's dissolution on 13 January of Moslem Brotherhood, a fanatical religio-nationalist organization, is military regime's boldest move thus far to eliminate opposition. It is necessary move if regime is to achieve a settlement of Suez dispute.

In outlawing Brotherhood, however, Nagib government forces underground its only remaining opponent and takes on burden of its surveillance.

*No basis to charge pro British
was 50% of terrorism in British
initiated by Brother hood.*

I. Background of Moslem Brotherhood
in Egypt:

A. When outlawed, Moslem Brotherhood had extensive organization throughout country with some 2,000 branches containing several hundred thousand members. Affiliates in other Arab states have much less strength. Only banned nationalist Wafd Party claimed a larger following in Egypt.

1. Moslem Brotherhood, a religious society founded in 1929, sought to solve Egypt's social and political problems by strict observance of tenets of Islam. Members have always been fanatics and extreme nationalists with anti-Western bent.

~~SECRET~~

2. By 1948, when outlawed for terrorist activities and political murders, Brotherhood had become powerful political force and claimed membership as high as 2,000,000 - conservative estimates put it at 500,000. Opportunistic contacts with Communists reported at various times.
3. Despite ban, continued activities clandestinely until 1951 when officially reinstated as "cultural society."
4. Growing public reaction to excesses of Farouk regime increased ranks of Brotherhood in year immediately preceding army coup of July 1952, which demanded moral revival.

~~SECRET~~

II. Past Relations with the Military Regime
in Egypt:

- A. Following coup in July 1952, Moslem Brotherhood came to fore in Egyptian politics as only political group in Egypt which publicly supported military regime from start, and in turn regime put into practice or endorsed much of Brotherhood's program.
- B. When Egyptian government banned all political parties in January 1953, Moslem Brotherhood remained as only quasi-political organization legally in existence in Egypt. Regime ruled it a religious society and not subject to ban.
 - 1. Military regime apparently not prepared openly to challenge strength of Brotherhood.

- a. In past year reports of increasing friction between regime and Brotherhood as result of government efforts to establish control over all potential terroristic, para-military and "commandò"-type activities.
- b. Brotherhood also suffered internal dissensions during this period. Open conflict between factions developed in November 1953. Regime suspected of covertly supporting dissidence in effort to weaken organization.

~~SECRET~~

2. Late reports from Cairo

indicate regime had been seeking opportunity to crack down on Brotherhood. Antigovernment demonstration by Brotherhood students on 12 January occasion for outlawing organization. Announcement in Egypt withheld until some 400 leaders rounded up. No immediate repercussions to outlawing in Egypt, where emergency security measures in force. Government, which has situation in hand, continues to report discoveries of numerous caches of arms and explosives to keep before public inherent danger of Brotherhood.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

III. Repercussion in Neighboring States:

- A. Announcement of dissolution of Brotherhood in Egypt caused public repercussion in other Moslem countries.
1. Police called out in Khartoum to break up Sudanese student protest. Demonstration witnessed by Major Salam, Egyptian minister for Sudanese affairs and General Amir, commander in chief of Egyptian armed forces now visiting the Sudan.
 2. In Syria, head of local branch and followers protested banning to Egyptian ambassador in Damascus.
 3. Moslem Brotherhood officials in Jordan issued bitter statement accusing Egyptian government of

~~SECRET~~ - 7 -

4. Leader of Pakistan Moslem extremist group reportedly protested banning Brotherhood.
5. Navab Safavi, notorious Iran terrorist leader who helped rouse Cairo students to riot, has been politely but firmly detained and expelled from Egypt.
6. No serious repercussions in Arab states expected. Brotherhood groups not strong enough to challenge local authorities.

IV. Implications for the Future:

- A. Egyptian government crackdown on Moslem Brotherhood will give regime for the present greater freedom of action in its relations with West and dealing with Britain on Suez base.

~~SECRET~~

1. Regime has capabilities of enforcing overt dissolution order.
2. Regime will probably restrict repression of Brotherhood to action against its leaders and attempt avoid antagonizing rank and file by reviving "religious and cultural" aspects of organization under direct control.

B. Drive against Brotherhood poses serious longer-range risk for Egyptian regime.

1. Its two strongest opponents, nationalist Wafd Party and Brotherhood, now both underground. Both have extensive organizations which may be expected to be used against regime.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

2. Brotherhood has considerable experience in terrorism and assassination.
3. Failure of regime to achieve a settlement with Britain palatable to Egyptian people or to promote impressive economic reforms will invite its opponents to act with widespread popular support.
4. In such a situation, regime has choice of getting out or attempting to hold by sheer military force.

~~SECRET~~